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Love and Hate

The world was once frozen over during the Ice Age, and shortly after the Ice Age ended a few lucky cavemen discovered fire. “Fire” is the phenomenon of combustion manifested in light, flame, and heat. “Ice” refers to frozen water or the state of coldness. Fire and ice are two contrasting elements, yet they both have a strong impact on whatever they come in contact with. They both share the ability to destroy something, whether it be turning it into ashes or freezing it solid. The damage these forces can cause is permanent and will forever leave a mark on those affected. Robert Frost’s poem “Fire and Ice,” describes that the world will end from either fire’s rapid consumption or ice’s quieting silence of cold (Frost 746). The title of “Fire and Ice” not only represents the true brutality of flames and frozen snow, but it also represents the bitter end that mankind can create from the strongest of emotions. The denotations of fire and ice create a visual representation of love and hate. As the poem states, they both are plausible causes for the end of the world. The destructive abilities of fire and ice are clearly noted by their denotations, but the connotations of the two words instill “the meaning of the poem.” Anyone could ponder about a natural disaster destroying the world, but when understanding the double meanings of the so called annihilators of the earth, Frost’s poem transforms into a well, thought-out impactful message.

The fate of the world is the topic at hand, but what if the world is not referring to earth? Fire and ice in the denotative sense would ruin the land, trees, and grass aspect of the world, while the “world” in the poem is meant to mean much more than just the geographical aspect of our planet. There are various interpretations for what the “world” in the poem represents (Frost 1). The world may refer to a relationship between two individuals, or, in a more general sense, it can be all of civilization. Whether specific or not, both interpretations relate more to an emotional context. Through this emotional context, the connotations of fire and ice prove themselves. The thought of fire in terms of a relationship evoke feelings of passion and lust in one’s mind. Deep desire and need are transmitted through the steamy and heated situations of fire. With this well known connection, another step can be taken to relate this passion to a most familiar term known as love. Though there is more to love than a strong physical attraction like the words passion and desire suggest, the hint of infatuation allows for this connection to be made. The description of the word fire, in terms of love, can by no means be described as a meaningful and selfless form of love. Instead, the fiery love refers to more of a tainted and desperate love. It’s more of an unwillingness to let go and obsession that leads to hysteria. A deep longing for passion can sometimes leave people irrational and willing to do whatever it takes to receive love they crave so dearly. With this desperation and ardor racing the minds of human upon human the world may find itself falling apart. Just as fire can spread rapidly killing all in its path, the delusional clouded thoughts of a passion driven love can leave just as deadly destruction.

Fire and ice are opposites, so if the connotation of fire would suggest a form of love, the connotation of ice could be relatable to hate, love’s enemy. The thought of ice can bring shivers down a person’s spine. That very feeling is never associated with positivity or happiness but instead fear or despair. When someone is referred to as having a cold personality, that person is considered uncaring and heartless. These common facts describe the double meaning of the ice that is also likely to lead to the end of the universe. In this sense, callous and selfish attitudes are slowly leading to the termination of mankind. As more and more show a lack of emotion or unfeeling dispositions towards others the kind acts that have for so long graced our race will cease to exist. This will in turn set humans up for eternal doom. The placement of the two words when they fall at the end of lines 4 and 7 respectively, proves the connotative meaning of “ice” as hate and “fire” as love (Frost 4-7). “Desire” ends the third line, which falls right before “fire” and “hate” finishes off the sixth line which precedes “ice.” These two words provide a direct description of the meaning of the two elements beyond the physical forms they take. Frost makes the poem personal by using his experiences to guide his choice on which he foresees as being the more likely destroyer. He sides with fire’s engulfing and possessing attitude to be the ultimate slayer when the end arises. Frost does not dismiss the bitter attitude of “ice,” though as he knows it too has the ability to not only cause pain but also continue a chain reaction of antipathy. The fact that fire wins could allude to the fact that fire has the ability to surpass ice and melt it away to only water, but nevertheless ice will put up a good fight.

The end of the world will be forever guessed, estimated, and feared until the day actually comes. Natural disasters such as a wild fire or an ice storm are likely forces to lead to the destruction of a populous and once thought unstoppable society. The meaning of Frost’s poem transmits that the end of the world will not be due to Mother Nature’s interference, but instead our demise may come from the twisted, yet real emotions of the human race. From an obsessed desire, to an unsympathetic behavior, the characteristics of mankind are continual and dangerous enough to lead the utter obliteration of the world. Natural disasters suddenly look a lot less threatening when, though slightly exaggerated, the acts of the inhabitants of the world become more clear and intentional every day.

Work Cited

Frost, Robert. "Fire and Ice." *Perinne's Literature: Structure, Sound, and Sense, Ninth Edition*. Eds. Thomas R. Arp and Greg Johnson. 9th ed. Boston: Thomson Wadsworth, 2006. 746. Print.

